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New nature centers go green

Metro hopes to duplicate success of programs at Warner Parks

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Three new centers opening this fall will offer an alternative to the Warner Parks Nature Center — the Metro Parks' mother ship for learning about and communing with nature. The cost of the eco-friendly centers is a snippet of about \$37 million in parks projects this year alone.

The centers come midway through a 10-year plan launched after a study showed the city's park system was in disrepair and wouldn't meet needs as more houses, condos and apartments popped up.

Dog parks, wireless Internet service, greenways and new community centers have been added in some areas.

The new nature centers are designed to give east Nashville's Shelby Bottoms a barge-like, water-inspired facility; the farm-based Bells Bend, a "barn"; and Beaman Park in the hills of Joelton, a "tree house."

More people served

Kim Eakes, a caregiver for seniors who goes to Beaman with her daughters, called this a "great idea." "You've got walking trails, but there's nothing of that caliber," she said. The Warner Parks center has long been a draw, with nature outings, assorted critters and a lifelike, walk-through birch tree. "Instead of having one nature center in one part of town, you're offering that kind of experience for more people across the county and are preserving more habitats," said Sandy Bivens, Metro Parks' chief of nature centers.

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